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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [BE](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: BELGIANS PAY A PRICE TO SECURE RELEASE OF HOSTAGE  
HELD IN IRAN

REF: BRUSSELS 2892

Classified By: Ambassador Sam Fox, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Belgian FM De Gucht's recent success in gaining the release of two Belgians kidnapped last month in Iran came at a price. In response to a direct question from the Ambassador to De Gucht during a meeting on September 18, 2007, De Gucht described a complicated three way deal of which the hostage release was only a part. He said one part of the deal was for the Belgians to release a convicted criminal being held in a Belgian prison in exchange for the two Belgians. The convict was reportedly related to the head of the gang responsible for kidnapping the Belgians. The second part of the deal involved the kidnappers. They inexplicably agreed to pay 200,000 euros to "the Iranian authorities," De Gucht. "What they (i.e., the Iranians) did with it," De Gucht said, "I cannot say." Last, the Belgians pledged to provide 500,000 euros to the UN Office of Drug Control Programs for construction of a prison to hold drug offenders in Iran. The Belgians are involved with a similar project in Afghanistan. The Minister asked that the USG do nothing to publicize this information.

[¶2.](#) (C) The Minister's session in Tehran with Iranian FM Mottaki followed a rigid format. According to De Gucht, the Belgian side brushed aside every Iranian attempt to draw him into a discussion of the nuclear issue by reiterating the need for Iran to live up to its international commitments. De Gucht said he had agreed to go to Iran only when it became clear that the last remaining hostage would gain his release. The Belgians thought the Iranians seemed eager for the visit to take place since senior level western leaders only rarely came to their country. "They wanted to demonstrate to their people that they were not pariahs."

[¶3.](#) (C) Comment: We will delve deeper into this issue in the coming days, both with an eye to possible domestic Belgian reaction to the prisoner's release (which has yet to hit the newswires here), and to determining if there were any other side arrangements. End Comment. Fox

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